

Mr. Gokhale's Return.
from
South Africa

MR. GOKHALE'S RETURN
FROM
SOUTH AFRICA.

ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION

SHERIFF'S MEETING

AT

The Town Hall, Bombay

POONA

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT THE DNYAN PRAKASH PRESS

BY

NATESH APPAJI DRAVID

1912

Mr GOKHALE'S RETURN

ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION

SHERIFF'S MEETING IN BOMBAY

The Hon Mr G K Gokhale who returned to Bombay from South Africa on Friday (Dec 13) had a gratifying reception on Saturday (Dec 14) afternoon when he addressed a public meeting in the Bombay Town Hall convened by the Sheriff of Bombay and explained what he had done and the conclusions he had arrived at. Long before the time fixed for the meeting the hall was picked and there were scores who could not gain admission. There were Indians of all nationalities, a large number of ladies and a good sprinkling of Europeans, many prominent citizens supporting Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy on the platform.

Among those present at the meeting were the Sheriff (Mr Narottam Morarji Gokuldas), Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy, Sir Henry Proctor, the Hon Mr C H Armstrong the Rev Dr Mackichan, Dr Stanley Reed, Sir Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney, Sir Shapurji B Broacha, Mr Ratan J Tata, the Hon Sir Vitthal Das D Thackersey, the Hon Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla, Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, the Hon Mr Jalubhai Samaldas, the Hon Mr Manmohandas Ramji Mr Jamsetji A Wadia, Mr Hormasji A Wadia, Mr N N Wadia, Mr C N Wadia, Professor N G Velunkar, Mr K Natrajan, Mr Chunilal V Metha the Hon Mr Fazulbhoy M Chinoy, Mr Jehangir B Petit, Mr Haji Yusuf Haji Ismail, Mr Hormusji J Bhabha, Mr Salebhoy Baroda walla, Dr Dinshaw Master and many others.

Mr Dadabhai Naoroji wrote " I am sorry I shall not be able to attend the meeting to morrow Mr Gokhale is an earnest worker for the good of India and he well deserve our acknowledgment "

Mr Mudholkar from Amraoti wired as follows —“ I cordially join citizens of Bombay in welcoming the Hon Mr Gokhale on his return from South Africa, and in thanking him for great and valuable services rendered to the country in undertaking at great trouble the investigation of the Indian question in South Africa and for endeavouring to bring about a better understanding between Indians and Colonists ”

Other letters regretting inability to be present and sympathising with the movement were received from Sir Currimbhoy Ibrahim and the Hon Mr Fazulbhoy Currimbhoy

Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy, who was voted to the chair on the motion of Sir Cowasji Jehangir seconded by the Hon Mr Manmohandas Ramji briefly opened the meeting He said —Gentlemen, I have much pleasure in offering a cordial welcome on your behalf to our distinguished countryman the Hon Mr Gokhale, who has returned to our shores after a long absence of several months I propose to be very brief, for it is not long since I had the privilege of speaking about Mr Gokhale and his work, and it was only the other day that in this very hall I dwelt at some length upon the South African question his views upon which we have gathered here to learn I have not therefore much to say this evening but I think I should be failing in my duty if I did not draw particular attention to the fact that our friend's visit to the Transvaal has been accomplished at much personal sacrifice He has not been in the best of health lately and he had gone to enjoy a well earned holiday But the call of duty found him as ready as ever and he went to study at close quarters a question, which is bound up with our national

honour, and which raises issues far more momentous than can be measured by the number of people whom it immediately affects. What he has accomplished, we shall shortly know. The problem is complex and thorny and, as you are aware, in the peculiar circumstances of our labours too often bear no fruit in the immediate present, but merely clear the ground for the generations yet to come. Let us not therefore, set our hopes too high and expect the immediate solution of a question which has baffled the wits of statesmen in more than one hemisphere. Let us rather offer our distinguished countryman a cordial welcome home and our hearty thanks for the work he has done. With the thoroughness which has characterised all his public activities he has seen and studied on the spot a problem, which demands the highest efforts of state manship, if a solution is to be arrived at, which while not ignoring the necessities of the situation shall be in consonance with our national honour and in accordance with our just demands.

•

MR GOKHALE'S SPEECH

Mr Chairman Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cannot tell you how glad I am to be back again in India and my joy is further intensified by the kind and cordial greetings which this great gathering has extended to me and by the generous terms in which you, Sir, have spoken of my work in South Africa. Your warm welcome, joined to the undoubted satisfaction with which our countrymen in South Africa have regarded the visit, is to me ample reward for such strain as the work imposed on me while it lasted. You probably know what I have publicly stated more than once, that my visit was undertaken in response to an earnest invitation repeatedly pressed on me by our great countryman there Mr Gandhi. When I first made up my mind, however to pay the visit, my idea was to go about the country as quietly as possible, to visit all important Indian centres to collect such facts as I could concerning the treatment to which our countrymen were sub-

jected there and on my return to India to lay those facts before the Government and the people of this country in the hope of stimulating thereby greater exertions on this side in support of the Indian cause in South Africa. And it was not till I actually landed at Cape Town and saw the elaborate programme which had been drawn up for me that I realised what work was expected of me by my countrymen there. Again it was no part of my first plan to seek to approach the authorities in South Africa directly with a statement of Indian grievances. That suggestion was first made to me by the authorities in London. I think I am committing no indiscretion when I state that it was Lord Crewe and Mr Harcourt who strongly suggested to me the extreme desirability of my seeking an opportunity to discuss the Indian question personally with the Ministers in South Africa. My answer to them at that time, however, was of a tentative nature. I said that I should be glad to act on the suggestion, if I found it possible to do so consistently with self respect. If I was subjected to serious indignities in South Africa, as I had fully apprehended I might be then I said that I should not care to thrust myself on the Ministers. When, however, I reached Cape Town and actually saw how anxious the Union Government was to treat me with every consideration and how arrangements had already been made for my meeting not only my own countrymen at all important centres, but also members of the European community at those centres, the only thing left to me was to enter wholeheartedly into the spirit of the arrangements and utilize to the full the opportunities placed within my reach. To have done anything else in these circumstances would have been to betray the cause which I had gone there to serve and to show myself unworthy of the confidence which my countrymen there had chosen to repose in me.

HOW THE TIME WAS SPENT

Mr Gokhale then described how his four weeks in South Africa were spent in visiting important Indian centres, meet-

ing not only thousands of Indian residents in that country but also a large number of Europeans, many of them men of note addressing meetings sometimes composed exclusively of Indians, sometimes of Europeans, but more often mixed gatherings of both Europeans and Indian and discussing the several phases of the question in interviews and at conferences with leading men of all shades of opinion and representing various interests. He was already fairly familiar with the Indian side of the question and it did not take him long after his arrival at Cape Town to acquire a firm grasp of the facts of the case so far as the Indians were concerned. And the access that he was enabled to have to the European community gave him exceptional opportunities to acquaint himself with the feelings and opinions of different sections of the European community. After examining the whole question from every point of view, Mr Gokhale met the Ministers, General Botha, General Smutts and Mr Fischer, on 14th November at Pieteria in a long interview lasting for two hours, when they went over the whole ground point by point and there was a full and frank interchange of view, the Ministers promising a careful consideration of the cases submitted to them and they on their side explaining what they considered to be the special difficulties of the position. On the following day Mr Gokhale had an opportunity of laying the whole matter before the Governor General, H E Lord Gladstone and then he left South Africa, feeling satisfied in his own mind that he had done all that he was capable of and bringing away with him the liveliest recollections of the wealth of affection lavished on him by his countrymen there, of the extreme kindness with which the European community had treated him and of the great consideration and courtesy shown to him by the Union Government.

A POSITION OF DIFFICULTY

Proceeding Mr Gokhale said — Before I attempt to give you an idea of the state of things as I found it there, I should like to make one or two observations of a somewhat per

sonal character The first is about the extreme difficulty of my position in South Africa Never before in all my life, I assure you, had I to walk on such difficult and delicate ground nor did I ever feel so oppressed with a sense of responsibility as during my four weeks in South Africa Even the special courtesy and consideration shown me by the Union Government while it undoubtedly facilitated my work, added in a way to my difficulties for, while one section of the European community, the extreme anti-Indian section, was resentful that such consideration should have been shown to me, those who represented the better European mind, though satisfied at heart that the right thing had been done were nervous as to whether undue advantage might not be taken of the position to put a forced interpretation on what had been done On the Indian side, on the other hand, the feeling in the matter was one of rather excessive jubilation In such circumstances a single thoughtless act or even an unguarded expression not only on my part but on the part of any one of our countrymen there—and they were meeting me daily in most enthusiastic demonstrations—might have resulted in serious unpleasantness and embarrassment all round inflicting an injury on the cause difficult soon to remedy Throughout my four weeks the dread of this possibility never left me for a moment and constantly weighed me down, and I thank God here to day speaking in your midst, as I did at Iretoria on the occasion of my last speech in South Africa, that no untoward incident marred the smooth progress of my visit and that even if no actual good results from my labours there, at any rate I am happy to feel that I have done no harm

MR GANDHI

My second observation will be about my dear and illustrious friend, Mr Gandhi From the moment I landed at Cape Town to the moment I left South Africa and even afterwards during nearly the whole of my visit to East Africa, Mr Gandhi was with me and we were together nearly every moment of our waking hours He had taken upon himself the duties of my private

secretary, but he was in reality my guide, philosopher and friend. I do not wish to speak on this occasion of the devoted love with which he surrounded me but I feel it to be my duty to pay a brief, though altogether inadequate tribute to the great work he has done for India in South Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen, only those who have come in personal contact with Mr Gandhi, as he is now, can realize the wonderful personality of the man. He is without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. Nay, more. He has in him the marvellous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs. During the recent passive resistance struggle in the Transvaal—would you believe it?—twenty seven hundred sentences of imprisonment were borne by our countrymen there under Mr Gandhi's guidance to uphold the honour of their country. Some of the men among them were very substantial persons, some were small traders, but the bulk of them were poor humble individuals, hawkers, working men and so forth men without education men not accustomed in their life to think or talk of their country. And yet these men braved the horrors of gaol life in the Transvaal and some of them braved them again and again rather than submit to degrading legislation directed against their country. Many homes were broken in the course of that struggle, many families dispersed, some men, at one time wealthy, lost their all and became paupers, women and children endured untold hardships. But they were touched by Mr Gandhi's spirit and that wrought the transformation, thus illustrating the great power which the spirit of man can exercise over human minds and even over physical surroundings. In all my life I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Mr Gandhi does,—our great patriarch, Mr Dadabhai Naoroji and my late master Mr Ranade—men before whom not only are we ashamed of doing anything unworthy, but in whose presence our very minds are afraid of thinking anything that

is unworthy. The Indian cause in South Africa has really been built up by Mr Gandhi. Without self and without stain he has fought his great fight for this country during a period now of twenty years and India owes an immense debt of gratitude to him. He has sacrificed himself utterly in the service of the cause. He had a splendid practice at the bar making as much as five to six thousand pounds a year, which is considered to be a very good income for a lawyer in South Africa. But he has given all that up and he lives now on £3 a month like the poorest man in the street. One most striking fact about him is that though he has waged this great struggle so ceaselessly, his mind is absolutely free from all bitterness against Europeans. And in my tour nothing warmed my heart more than to see the universal esteem in which the European community in South Africa held Mr Gandhi. At every gathering leaving Europeans when they came to know that Mr Gandhi was there, would immediately gather round him anxious to shake hands with him, making it quite clear that though they fought him hard and tried to crush him in the course of the struggle they honoured him as a man. To my mind Mr Gandhi's leadership of the Indian cause in South Africa is the greatest asset of that cause and it was an inestimable privilege to me that he was with me throughout my tour to pilot me safely through my difficulties."

THE POSITION ANALYSED

Proceeding to describe the position of the Indians in South Africa, Mr Gokhale said that the Union of South Africa consisted of four provinces—Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal and Orange—and in the whole Union there was a total Indian population of about a hundred and fifty thousand persons. Of that, roughly speaking, about a hundred and twenty thousand were in Natal, about twenty thousand were in the Cape and about ten thousand were in the Transvaal. In Orange there were hardly any Indians, the total number not exceeding a

hundred, as some years ago the Boer Government of that time forcibly expelled from the republic all Indians except such as were domestic servants. Four fifths of the entire Indian population in South Africa represented indentured labourers, ex-indentured labourers and their descendants. The remaining were free persons who had gone there at their own expense in the wake of the indentured labourers. One peculiarity of the position which the meeting had to realize was that there was no educated class among the Indian in South Africa similar to the educated class of this country, the men who followed what were called learned or liberal professions being so few as to be counted on one's fingers. The bulk of the people were either tradesmen or working men and a few were domestic servants. The traders were most of them petty traders though some were fairly substantial. Speaking roughly there were about two thousand traders and five to six thousand hawkers in each one of the three provinces mentioned. Of the working men a large proportion were still serving their indenture while the rest were ex-indentured labourers or their descendants. In the Cape Indians could acquire both the municipal and the political franchise. In Natal they had the municipal franchise but not the political, and in the two Dutch provinces they were rigorously excluded from both the municipal and the political franchise. The present Immigration law was different for the different provinces. In Cape Colony and Natal Indians could enter only by passing a test in a European language and the average number of such immigrants for the last few years was between 40 and 70 for the two provinces together—a surprisingly small number. In the Transvaal and Orangeia new Indians were at present prohibited altogether from entering by law. The traders and hawkers' license in Cape Colony and Natal had to be renewed every year and the grant of new licenses lay in the discretion of local authorities manned almost entirely by the European trade rival of Indian traders. In the Transvaal, on the other hand, licenses had to be granted as a matter of course for the mere tender of a license fee. But there were two laws

in force there known as the Gold Law and the Townships Act, the combined effect of which was to make those licences practically worthless. Wherever an area was declared to be a gold area under those laws, Indians could only reside and trade in special locations, situated as a rule at some distance from the towns. In Cape Colony and Natal, Indians could own land and acquire other immovable property, which they could not do in the Transvaal and Orange. In addition to these there were several minor disabilities including many galling social ones of greater or less severity in the different provinces. Finally there was hardly any provision for the education of Indian children. A few primary schools were to be found here and there, mostly maintained by missionary bodies or by the community itself. Throughout South Africa there was no provision of any kind for the secondary, higher or technical education of Indian children.

A HEART RENDING SITUATION

When the speaker arrived in South Africa and took a broad survey of the Indian position as he found it, he confessed his heart for a time sank within him. The position in many ways was truly pitiable and heart-rending. It was well known that the lot of their countrymen in the Transvaal hard as it was in the days of the Boer Republic had grown far harder since it became a British province. But it was not so well known that in Natal and even in the Cape the situation had been steadily getting worse since the Union, the harsh anti-Indian Transvaal spirit gradually infecting the whole Union. Mr Gokhale found on his arrival that almost every section of the Indian community throughout South Africa was filled with a serious dread about its future, a feeling of insecurity, harassment and oppression prevailing generally such as was bound to demoralize any community. A large proportion of the European population was evidently determined to make things so intolerable for the Indians there that they would of their own accord get out of the country. Not only were some of the laws under which they

lived harsh and unjust, but even the administration of other laws which in themselves were neither harsh nor unjust, was so oppressive as to drive the community well nigh to despair. Thus the Immigration Law in regard to old Indian settlers in the Cape and Natal was being so worked as to fill every one with the fear that if he left the country temporarily on a visit to India or elsewhere, he might have difficulty in getting back. About the same time as Mr Gokhale's arrival at Cape Town, a case occurred there illustrating what he was saying. At present an Indian settler in that province, wishing to be temporarily absent from the country, had to take out a permit with him, specifying the period within which he should return. And an Indian trader, who had thus left with an year's permit on a visit to India, leaving his business in charge of his wife and children returned one day late, owing to his steamer having been held up four days on the way by a storm. If the steamer had run according to schedule time he would have arrived at Cape Town 3 days before the expiry of his permit. And yet on the technical ground that he had not returned within the specified time, he was turned back, his business ruined and his wife and children put under the necessity of leaving the country. Similarly in Natal old settlers were provided with domicile certificates, which were supposed to give them the right of going out of the country and coming back whenever they liked, the only provision being that the immigration officer should satisfy himself about the genuineness of the certificates. In exercise of that power even holders of certificates, 15 or 16 years old, well known persons, were being cross examined on their return to Natal after a temporary absence as to minute details of where they lived, what they did when they first arrived and so forth. And the smallest discrepancy between the answers unwarily given by the men and the actual recorded facts was deemed sufficient to justify the rejection of the certificates, compelling the holders to return to India, absolutely ruined men. Now the speaker would put it to his European friends on the platform how many of them, if they were suddenly asked all sort of

questions as to when they first came into this country where they lived, what they did and so on, would be able to answer such questions without making any mistake. Again, the question of trading and hawking licenses was agitating the Indian mind gravely throughout Cape Colony and Natal. Both provinces had now clearly entered on a policy of granting no new licenses to Indians as far as possible and of steadily extinguishing all existing licenses as opportunities offered themselves. As those licenses were renewable every year, a feeling of the utmost uncertainty as to what would happen to his license when the time for a renewal came, filled the mind of every Indian trader. Business men in Bombay would have no difficulty in understanding how ruinous must be the consequences of such a state of things and how such constant anxiety about the future must paralyze and finally destroy all business enterprise among the persons affected. In the Transvaal the steady extension of the gold area condemning Indian trader to trade and reside only in locations was in itself a frightful hardship.

RELENTLESS OPPRESSION

But some local authorities were carrying the policy of relentless oppression still further by breaking up old locations if Indians were found to be doing business successfully in them and ordering them to remove to fresh locations even more disadvantageously situated. The speaker had personally visited several locations and he could only say that the whole policy involved in them deserved to be denounced in the strongest terms. They would thus see how gravely disturbed and anxious the mind of the Indian trading community in South Africa was. The labouring population, in addition to many disabilities laboured under a special grievance of their own which caused them untold suffering, i.e., the £3 License Tax. The speaker had no hesitation in saying that a more cruel impost it was impossible to conceive. Under it all indentured Indians in Natal who completed their indentures after 1901, and their descendants were liable to pay annually

£3 each, all males above the age of 16 and females above the age of 13 being so liable. And for non payment they were sent to jail with hard labour. That under any law a girl of 13 should have to pay £3 a year to the State and should be liable to be sent to jail with hard labour for non payment was a thing too horrible to contemplate. If they took an ordinary family of a father a mother and two daughters of 13 and 15, with one or two younger children, they would find that the family had to pay £12 a year for the mere permission to live in the colony of Natal—and that after the man and the woman had contributed five years labour to the prosperity of the Colony under a system of indenture. Now the average monthly wage of the man might be taken at about 20 shillings and the woman with her two daughters, after looking after the household might earn about 10 shillings a month among them—a total income of about £2 a month. Out of that sum £1 or full one half had to be given as that miserable License Tax. After that there was rent to pay and cost of food and clothing and all ordinary taxes common to the general community. Need anybody wonder that a prominent member of the Natal Legislature declared openly two years ago that the impost broke up families drove men into paths of crime and women into lives of shame? One of the most harrowing sights at which Mr Gokhale had to be present, was a meeting in Durban of those who were liable to pay the £3 Tax. About 5000 persons were present. As man after man and woman after woman came forward and narrated his or her suffering due to the Tax, it was impossible not to feel overwhelmed by feelings of indignation pity and sorrow. One old woman of 60 was there who had been to jail 6 times for inability to pay the tax and Mr Gokhale could not recall the case even after that interval without emotion. As things stood, unless a fairly satisfactory settlement was soon arrived at, it would not take many years for the Indian community of South Africa to be practically harrassed out of the country after undergoing great suffering and losses.

POSITION ON EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

That was the position of the Indian community as he found it. He wanted next to describe to them briefly the position of the European community. It was necessary to understand that position clearly, to understand their interests, their difficulties, their views and their sentiments and even their prejudices. They were a handful of people—only about a million and a quarter in all—in the midst of a vast indigenous population at a totally different grade of civilisation. And the contact between the two races had created grave problems—social, political, economic and moral—which were already filling the European mind in that sub-continent with uneasiness, misgiving and even dread. And they found in the midst of their difficult and complicated situation a third element introduced, belonging to another civilization and representing other modes of life and thought. It was true that the present number of Indians in South Africa was only a lakh and a half against 12½ lacs of Europeans. But the Europeans felt that there were 300 millions of people in India and if Indians continued to come freely into South Africa, there was nothing to prevent several millions from going there and swamping the European community and practically making the country another India. The fear was based on an absolute misapprehension, but it was there deep and strong and general, and no useful purpose would be served by shutting one's eyes to it. In addition to this there was the tremendous colour prejudice which existed in that land—a prejudice felt even more by the Dutch than by the English—and there was also the dread of Indian competition on the part of small European traders, who felt that they could not hold their own against their Indian rivals in a fair field owing to the Indians' less expensive scale of living. The combined result of all these three causes was the present harsh and oppressive policy towards Indians—a policy plainly directed to making the lot of the Indians in that country so hard as practically to compel them to leave the country or if remain they must, to remain there as a servile, degraded and depressed community.

A GRAVE SITUATION

Such was the position, grave, anxious and extremely difficult. What was to be the way out of it? So long as the European mind in South Africa was dominated by the fear of a serious influx of Indians swamping the Europeans, so long there was no chance of securing, let alone absolute equality, even reasonably just and humane treatment for our countrymen, such as would enable them to live in peace and security and steadily advance to the position of a worthy element in a self-governing community. Even the best friends of Indians among the Europeans in South Africa—and there was a small section that could be thus described—were convinced that unless the fear of being swamped was removed from the European mind, they were powerless to urge with any effect the plea of juster and more humane treatment for the Indian community. Another section, a much larger section, that had the sense of fairness to feel heartily aggrieved of the present policy pursued towards the Indians would also then, but not till then, sympathise with the struggle of the Indians against their present treatment. The Indian community of South Africa itself also clearly felt the necessity of removing that fear groundless more or less though it was, in view of the fact that the average number of free immigrants during the last few years had been only between 40 and 50—a figure however, which the ordinary European there did not accept and could not be persuaded to accept as correct. For some time past, therefore the policy of our countrymen in South Africa under the leadership of Mr Gandhi was while insisting on maintaining intact their theoretical rights as equal subjects of the Empire in the legislation of the country to strive for such a modification in practice of the present policy of injustice and oppression as would enable the community to live and prosper in peace and security and steadily advance in status and importance in that land. And even the briefest visit that one could pay to South Africa would satisfy one that

that was the only wise, sound, practical, and statesmanlike course for the Indians to adopt in existing circumstances. It was in accordance with that course that in the compromise which was arrived at between Mr Gandhi and General Smutts last year under which the Passive Resistance movement was suspended the Union Government agreed not to make any legislative differentiation against Indians in the proposed new Immigration law. Mr Gandhi on his side agreeing that in practice the discretion vested in the executive administering the law, might be exercised by the administration as it thought reasonable subject to a minimum number of Indians being admitted every year to supply the higher needs of the community and replace its wear and tear in certain directions. That minimum was six Indians for the Transvaal, where under the existing law no Indian whatever was admitted. For the whole Union the minimum now asked was forty which was the present number of free immigrants annually on an average of several years. The essence of the compromise was that by removing legislative in quality the theoretical rights of the Indians as subjects of the Empire should be maintained, while by agreeing to a limitation of new immigrants to the present average number, the fear of an indiscriminate influx which haunted the European mind, should be removed. Once that was done the Indians there could struggle far more effectively than at present for juster more equal and more humane treatment in other respects. Mr Gokhale's own work in South Africa had been done on those lines. He did not ask for an inch either more or less than what the Indian community there had been asking. His one advantage was that he was enabled to have access to the European community, as no other Indian had it before him and he was thus enabled to address his appeal for justice and humanity to the very heart and conscience of the European community, speaking to its members face to face.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

On his return to India the previous day, Mr Gokhale was astonished to learn that the view was expressed in some quarters that the line taken by him in South Africa was wrong, that he should have stood out there for the open door in practice and nothing less and that the surrender of India's rights in the matter already made by Mr Gandhi had been confirmed by him. All he would say in regard to that criticism was that those who passed it did not show any real grasp of the problem in South Africa. The supreme question for the Indian community there was not to urge a policy of the open door for more Indians to come there but to secure such an amelioration of the conditions under which they lived that their lot might become more bearable and they might have opportunities of growing into an important part of a self governing community. And the only chance of their securing that was if they approached the whole question in a practical spirit. Mr Gokhale could certainly have stood out for the open door in practice in South Africa. He could have made brave speeches on that subject and could have returned to his country feeling that he had made brave speeches. But the cause of the Indian community in South Africa could not have been served that way. The European community would have been made if anything, more implacable in its determination to get rid of the Indians at all costs and the eventual expulsion of Indians from that sub continent would only have been hastened by such a course. As regards the charge brought against Mr Gandhi, it amounted to an utter travesty of the actual facts. After all their rights to equal treatment in the Empire to day were largely theoretical. But even to maintain them theoretically intact Mr Gandhi had four times to go to jail and had inspired hundreds of his countrymen to do the same. Those theoretical rights would no doubt steadily grow more and more into rights enjoyed actually in practice but that was a matter of slow growth and it depended in a large measure upon the improvement of their position in India itself.

PRESENT OUTLOOK

In concluding Mr Gokhale said —Ladies and Gentlemen, before I sit down, you may well ask me what is now the outlook in South Africa Well the catalogue of our grievances there is so long that, as General Botha said to me in the course of our interview even the strongest Ministry that could be conceived in South Africa to day would not be strong enough to remedy those grievances all at once and if it attempted any such thing, it would straightway be hurled from power The situation is such that though we must keep up the struggle ceaselessly, we must not expect anything else than a slow though steady amelioration of our lot But I think in certain matters relief will be forthcoming almost immediately In the first place, I fully expect that the provisional settlement arrived at between Mr Gandhi and General Smutts as regards the Passive Resistance movement, which the Government found itself powerless to carry through Parliament last session will be successfully carried through this year The actual working of the Immigration law also will, I expect, soon become milder and more considerate Then that outrageous impost, the three pound license tax, will, I fully expect, go in the course of this year In fact I may mention that the Ministers have authorised me to say that they will do their best to remove the grievance as early as possible In the matter of educational the position will materially improve and the actual administration of law, such as the Gold Law and Townships Act, will tend to become less and less burdensome In one respect, however, I fear the position will not soon change for the better and it is even possible that it may grow worse before it becomes better And that is in regard to Trading Licences Here, however our community is fighting for bare justice And it has behind it in the matter the sympathy not only of the Government of India and of the Imperial Government but also of the better mind of the European community in South Africa And in the struggle, if only we in this country do our duty properly our countrymen there will win And this brings me to my concluding observations Ladies and Gentle

men I strongly feel many friends of our cause in England and South Africa also feel, that so far India has not done her duty by her children across the seas, struggling to uphold her honour amidst unparalleled difficulties. One man among t us, it is true, has set a great and glorious example—my friend Mr Ratan Tata—whose name, I assure you, is held in the deepest affection and gratitude by the Indian community in South Africa. A committee in Madras has also done some work and a committee here has collected some funds but all this taken together, amounts to but little, considering the issues involved. I hope, however, that whatever may have been our remissness in the past, we shall do better in this respect in the future. I hope we shall all take in the future more interest in what will go on in South Africa follow the developments more carefully and enable our countrymen there to feel that we stand solid and united behind them. I hope too that we shall collect and send much larger funds in aid of the cause there than we have hitherto done. Remember the community there is already exhausted financially and otherwise by its long struggle. Remember also that it requires assistance not only in waging this most unequal struggle but also for providing educational and other facilities for the moral and material well being of its children. Remember finally that it is not merely the interest of the Indian community in South Africa that is involved in the struggle but our whole future as a nation in this Empire is involved in it. In proportion as we do our duty in this matter shall we have advanced more and more towards a position in this Empire worthy of the self-respect of civilized beings. In proportion as we do this duty, shall we have deserved well of our country, of our children and our children's children.

OTHER SPEAKERS

MR ARMSTRONG'S SYMPATHY

On the conclusion of Mr Gokhale's address those present were asked to adopt the following resolution —

That this public meeting of the citizens of Bombay accords a hearty welcome to the Hon ble Mr G K Gokhale, C I E, on the return from his visit to South Africa at the invitation of our countrymen in that colony, it puts on record its high appreciation of the cordial reception given to him by the Government and the people of all classes in the South African Union and expresses its earnest hope that as the result of Mr Gokhale's visit and of his endeavours to bring about a better understanding between the Indians and the Colonists a completely satisfactory solution will be found at an early date of the problems connected with the position of Indians in South Africa as subjects of the British Crown and as citizens of the British Empire

The Hon Mr C H Armstrong, who proposed the resolution, said —Gentlemen, this resolution seems to cover the whole ground. It accords as we most assuredly do, a very hearty welcome to Mr Gokhale on his return from South Africa and it assures him of our great appreciation of his efforts to bring about a settlement of difficult questions which have troubled the Imperial Government and the people of this country for several years and for which at one time a satisfactory solution appeared to be an almost impossible matter. If Mr Gokhale's efforts are likely to bring about a permanent settlement on a basis of mutual regard and esteem he has done a great work for the Empire for which he deserves our warmest and most appreciative thanks. We are also at the same time deeply sensible of, and very grateful for the very cordial reception accorded to Mr Gokhale by the Union Government and by all classes of people in South Africa, and I feel sure that lasting benefits must result

from a visit which seems to have given pleasure and satisfaction to all the parties engaged in this great controversy. It is no easy matter to step into an arena of heated feelings, but when I heard some months ago that Mr Gokhale was leaving England for South Africa, I felt in my own mind that his visit would almost certainly be a success, for Mr Gokhale possesses in a very marked degree a persuasive power of eloquence which is most convincing and his shrewd commonsense enables him after a full enquiry to brush aside points of difference which are not material and to bring into prominence for a final settlement only those matters which are of vital importance. I do not wish to enter into controversial matters, but it often seemed to me with the somewhat limited information one was able to obtain that in this South African controversy the two parties frequently took up positions from which it would be very difficult to withdraw and from which in fact they were often unable to withdraw. In such cases a fair minded man from outside is necessary as a go between and if he takes a broad and commonsense view of the situation he can often bring about a settlement satisfactory to both parties. If, as I gather, Mr Gokhale has achieved this, he has done a great work of which he deserves our very warmest thanks and for which I feel sure the Imperial Government and the Government of India as well as all classes of this country will be very grateful. We cannot expect in a controversy of this kind to get all we should like, but if a permanent settlement is now arrived at by mutual concessions it will only show that both parties to that controversy are imbued with a large amount of good feeling public spirit and commonsense which has only required the eloquence, persuasive powers and personal contact of Mr Gokhale to confirm into, as I hope it may, a lasting and a permanent settlement. Mr Gokhale has been absent from India for some time and in London many other questions affecting his country have no doubt engaged his attention. I am glad to see him back again in good health, eager, I have no doubt, for the important work which now lies before him.

On your behalf therefore as well as for myself I cordially and sincerely congratulate Mr Gokhale on the apparent success of his endeavours to bring about, as the resolution so very well states, a satisfactory solution of problems connected with the position of Indians in South Africa as subjects of the British Crown and as citizens of the British Empire

SIR BHALCHANDRA KRISHNA

Sir Bhalchandra Krishna seconded the resolution, dealing very briefly with one important aspect of this question which showed that a substantial advance had been made in the direction of bringing about a satisfactory solution of the position of Indians in South Africa by the work which Mr Gokhale was enabled to do there by his recent visit. "The European community and the Union Government," he said, "have shown a keen desire on their part to effect such a solution consistent, of course, with the interests of both the parties. To further this object they first, received Mr Gokhale and his mission with a marked degree of sympathy and candour and joined enthusiastically in the grand receptions which our brethren in South Africa organized in Mr Gokhale's honour, secondly, they desired Mr Gokhale to study the situation on the spot by giving him all the facilities and by putting before him their representation of the case and pointing out the difficulties in the way of an amicable settlement, and thirdly they assured Mr Gokhale of their anxious solicitude to do as much as justice and fair play would require. This is a sufficient evidence of their keen desire to amend matters at an early date and I think they are thus entitled to our thanks. I hope and trust that our rights as subjects and citizens of the British Empire will be safeguarded and that a solution will soon be arrived at so as to secure the peace and prosperity of our countrymen in that colony."

Mr H. A. Wadya supporting the resolution in a vigorous speech, said Mr Gokhale's speech should appeal not merely to his Bombay audience, but Indians throughout the country

Speaking in praise of Mr Gokhale's work, Mr Wadia said there was no one from whom Indians would more readily take advice than one who had served their interests so devotedly. It was a great advantage to know from such an authority what was the actual condition of Indians in South Africa, and he hoped everyone would weigh very carefully the advice he had given them and would then make up his mind as to what should be done.

The resolution, after being further supported by Mr Haji Yusuf Sobani, was heartily carried.

Sir Vithaldas Thackeray then proposed a vote of thanks to the Sheriff of Bombay for convening the meeting, observing that of the five meetings which Mr Narottam Morarji Gokuldass had convened during his period of office, none had been more important than the present.

Dr Stanley Reed, in seconding the proposition, observed that a vote of thanks at the close of a meeting was often regarded as a formality, but the term of office of their honoured fellow citizen was drawing to a conclusion, and they were all very glad to take this opportunity of saying how much they esteemed him and how proud they were to have him occupy this honourable position.

The Rev Dr Mackichan, in moving a vote of thanks to the Chairman, observed that he had never seen assembled in the Town Hall a greater meeting than the present. He only wished that the fellow countrymen of theirs in South Africa who had been fighting the Indian cause in that land had been present to witness such a representative gathering, to hear the wise, tender, and moderate counsel of Mr Gokhale and to recognise the true spirit of comradeship and respect for Government and Empire which animated the address of their guest—he wished they could have been present for he felt sure nothing which had happened in the agitation of this question could have exercised so great and convincing an influence on the minds of those concerned in the settlement of it.

The resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Jehangir B Petit, was cordially adopted and the meeting terminated.
